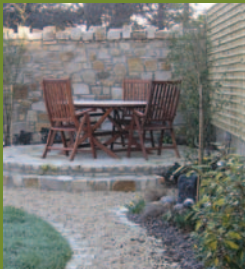




PLANNING YOUR PERFECT OUTDOOR LIVING

BY OWEN CHUBB



With new and more pressured living and working habits, our demands on our garden have fundamentally changed from a place where outdoor activity once consisted of the more traditional activities such as mowing the lawn and pruning the fruit trees. Modern lifestyles and associated expectations have remodelled the humble garden as a functional space. Yes, the outdoor living space has arrived!

Whether your choice is a cottage garden, where the flowers look marvellous and the food tastes wonderful; a sanctuary garden, cleverly designed for dining and entertaining friends or family; or simply a space for yourself to wind-down after a busy day – there is little doubt that in an outdoor living space function is more important than aesthetics. Put simply, the garden is increasingly evolving into a more encompassing role with many new and diverse activities, aided and abetted by the greater availability of technical advances across a range of product groups.

Location and Orientation

This shift in emphasis raises new challenges for setting out to design our outdoor living space. It demands a client-centric approach at all stages of the design process. A key element in determining the success of the outdoor living space is the location and orientation of the patio. Increasingly, patios become part of the house and are being designed as transitional spaces that blur the boundaries between indoor and outdoor living. It is no longer uncommon for clients to demand their patio design to be a continuance of the kitchen interior and require uniformity of style, levels and colour. The popularity of floor to ceiling high glazed panels, illustrates our client's preference to converge the indoor and outdoor living areas and in doing so create both a socialising space or a haven to get away from it all.



Before planning a patio, it is important to consider all the choices pertaining, not just in terms of materials but also size and location. Note the daily sun patterns. In Ireland we prefer sitting in the sun to sitting in the shade, but if our summers continue to get warmer and longer, this behaviour might also change.

On sloping sites, our best advice is to avoid being too quick to seek level ground, as varying levels can be imaginatively utilised to produce original patio forms. With regard to location, consider how and when you plan to use the patio, bearing in mind where the sun shines brightly within your garden at key times, such as early morning, mid-day or early evening. It is not uncommon, especially in larger sites, to have two or more patios designed with morning and afternoon activities in mind. The screening of noise, wind or neighbours together with the preferred screening choice – whether plants, panels or trees – is another important consideration.

Materials and Technology

In relation to hard landscaping materials, there is an abundance of choice available, including a vast and competitively priced range of man-made concrete based paving products. The very popular choice of natural stone is widely available in attractive and bright colours such as Indian Sandstone.

In simple terms, patios are durable, weatherproof areas of the garden requiring very little maintenance apart from an annual wash down, but they can provide a central role in the enjoyment of your outdoor living space.

With a little imagination, patios can become sophisticated retreats complete with contemporary accessories including outdoor LED lighting, remote controlled water features and audio visual systems together with programmed lighting effects, all incorporated within a framework of lush planting and striking architectural forms.

Regardless of your style of property, careful planning of your outdoor living space is not just a wise investment in your property, it will enhance the quality of your outdoor living and enjoyment for many years!

For professional advice on designing, building and planting your outdoor living space, contact:

ALCI (Association of Landscape Contractors of Ireland)

www.alci.ie

GLDA (Garden & Landscape Designers Association)

www.glda.com

Owen Chubb Landscapes Limited is an established and award-winning landscaping company, offering a complete landscaping service including garden design, construction and planting. Owen Chubb recently designed a show garden at the myHome.ie Spring House & Garden Show at the RDS. For information see www.owenchubblandscape.com or contact info@owenchubblandscape.com